K Country-Minister

THE Countrey-Minister's REFLECTIONS, ON THE City-Ministers Letter To his FRIEND;

Shewing the Reasons why We cannot Read the King's *Declaration in Our Churches.*

UNless you had told me in what manner your *Friend was Concern'd*, when he met with His Majesties Order to Read His Declaration; I cannot tell whether he had any ground to *wonder* or not: It looks like Ingenuity in you, to tell your Friend *your thoughts freely*; but if you mean by *freely*, the liberty you take to tell the World plainly, how much you Clash with your Prince, which seems to be your meaning, by your saying, *It is not a time to be Reserved*: Such a Freedom taken, might not long since have met with such a Suspition, of something being Reserved in this presumed Freedom, which might have been Accompanied with a dangerous *Inuendo*.

Your next Paragraph Owns, You are intirely Out-witted; which does as little Credit your Prudence, as your following Discourse, does your Cause: But if you fall for want of Fore-cast, who can help it? You would not abate your Violence one jott, when seasonably prompted to consider what the Fruit of your Rigorous, and more then Legal Prosecution of Protestants upon Penal Laws would produce; Nor will you stand to your Old and Avowed Principles.

There is indeed an *Honourable way of Falling*: When a Christian is called to Suffer for such things as will bear him out in Suffering, and whereof he will never have occasion to be Ashamed, 1 *Pet.* 4. 16. But it may deserve a Clergy-mans Consideration, Whether a Sturdy Resolvedness not to part with such things, as have oft occasioned uncommendable Practices, may not have some Affinity with that Evil-Doing, and as a Busy-Body in other Mens matters, which St. *Peter* cautions against, *v.* 15.

In the next place, You [illegible] *That to take away the Test and Penal Laws at this time, is but one step from Popery.*

Why did you not then Consent, and Press to have them taken [illegible]

there was no such Danger, yea, when the Taking them away, might have rendred the Introducing of Popery inconceivably Difficult, if not Impossible?

But how do you know, that you judge Right in this Case now? Why say you, *We have the Concurring Opinion of the Nobility and Gentry with us, who have already Suffered in this Cause:* But is this the proof of an Opinion, to say, That some of Honour and Wealth, have Embraced and Adhere to it, though with some Inconvenience to themselves? It would almost tempt a man to think a Reasoner is at a great Loss, when instead of Arguments, he insists for proof on the Outside Grandeur of such as are of the Opinion he pleads for.

When the Prince, and many of the People were averse to the Crucifying of *CHRIST*, what a Clamour did the Clergy make, *Have any of the Rulers, or the Pharisees believed on him? But this People who know not the Law, are Accursed*: John 7. 48, 49.

But suppose you are right in this point, What Efficacy hath the Clergy's Reading the King's Declaration, to take off the Tests and Penal Laws? If the Clergy's Breath can shake, or throw them away, Either the Laws are of little worth, and have a very sorry foundation, or the Clergy are Men of an Admirable Character.

But say you, *Though our Reading, do not immediately bring in Popery, yet it sets open our Church Doors for it*: I cannot Imagine, Why our Church Doors may not be Shutt and Lock'd as fast after Reading, as before; But if the Clergy pretend to such Power with their breath (as to break the Strongest Barrs, set Open our Church-Doors so Wide, as that they can never be Shut again): They may well allow their Prince a Dispensing Power; or how can He be Safe, as long as they can breathe?

Say you, *If we comply with this Order, all good Protestants will Despise and Hate us*: To Hate any Person, is against an Essential part of a good Protestants Religion; if the Order be not Sinful, they will have no cause to Despise you, because you read it, and Act therein according to your Avowed Doctrine.

If the Order be in your Opinion Sinful, Why do you not shew, what Law of God is Broken by it? This is that you should have done, and not have insisted on such poor low considerations, as Personal Danger, Dishonour, and falling without Pity.

He that Suffers on a Good Account, hath Honour and Comfort enough in himself, and from his God; He that Suffers in a bad Cause, falls Dishonourably, though he have never so many Great Men to pity him.

The *Great Difficulty* You say, of your Case is this, *That fall you must, Sooner or Later*; And therefore like Prudent Men, you think the Wisest Course is, to be Ruined presently; But it is not the first time I have heard of that Wise sort of People, who are for a short Life, and a Merry: But what Necessity is there of your latter Falling? This is certainly like a Melancholy Mans cherishing such a resolved Jealousie of wanting Bread at Last, as makes him Pine himself to Death in the midst of Plenty. But what is the ground of this Jealousie? *If we fall after Reading, this is the way never to Rise more*: And what mean you by that? Is it that after Reading the Declaration, if Penal Laws be taken away, you shall never be trusted again with such a Power to mischief your Fellow Subjects? If this be all, it may be all for the better; for neither the Prosperity of the Church of Christ, nor the Honour or Welfare of the Kingdom, do at depend on One Parties having it in the Power to Impoverish or Ruine all the Rest of the Nation for Meer Matters of Conscience.

You now come to *Examine the Matter* as you say, Impartially; And first, *Suppose*, That no Minister of the Church

England can give his consent to the Declaration. This is just as much as to beg the Question you should prove, and to all you Write signifies nothing with those who do not Suppose what you Suppose.

If you had indeed impartially Examined, and Proved the matter of the Declaration to be Sinful, you would have had no occasion to have discovered your Disloyalty, in pretending an Authority against the Command of your Prince, nor of Instancing (as if you had lately perused the Old History of the Barons Wars) that you have the Nobility and Gentry on your side.

You say, *Reading the Declaration would have no faults at all, but our duty, when the King Commands it; did we approve of the Matter of it.* This is not Express'd after the usual manner of the Church of *England*, when treating with the Dissenters; They would not then yield that Orders might be Suspended from a Publication, till those who were required to publish them did approve the matter, but it was then constantly Affirmed, that the Order must be Obeyed, if the matter of it were not plainly Sinful; and of this, you Asserted, Authority was to judge: Was not this the lowest, you would ever stoop, when Scruples were raised, and Conscience pretended against your Orders? Where does the Scriptures forbid it? If it be not Forbidden, the Command is plain (and the safest way must be taken, which is) to Obey. It is certain, some parts of the Declaration, contain very plain and necessary Truths, which Church-of-England-Ministers ought to Approve; If there be any thing in it which you think you may not Approve, that should have been Specified, it would have been more modest, humbly to have Applyed to the King for a convenient Explication in that part, then presently in Print, to Cry the whole is Sinful, and a device to ruine that you call the best Church in the World.

Next, You endeavour to prove, *That Reading the Declaration in our Churches, is an Interpretative Consent:* Because, say you, *By Our Law, Ministerial Officers are accountable, for their Actions; and the Authority of Superiours, though of the King himself, cannot justifie Inferiours in Executing any Illegal Command: With reference to the Command of Superiours, we are to exercise our own Judgment and Reason; and we may not obey a Prince against the Laws of the Land, or the Laws of God, because what we do, let the Authority be what it will that Commands it, becomes our own Act, and we are responsible for it.*

This sort of Arguing, (whatever may be in it) would not a few years since be allowed by some sort of People sufficiently known in this Kingdom, when urg'd in opposition to their Inclinations: Then the Prince was set above Law, and it was His Command, and the Notification of His Pleasure, made any thing (which was not *Malum in se*) Obliging; Private Judgment might by no means be admitted, when once the Governours had interessed themselves in it, and made a Determination. Is it not very Disingenuous for any Men, especially for Ministers, to have recourse to a Principle of their Adversaries, (which they have for many years decried), onely because they would serve themselves with it upon a particular Occasion, and to forsake their own Doctrine, which they Avowed so long as it would gratifie their Revenge and Ambition, tho now they think it may do them some Disadvantage? This is to fetch Weapons out of their Adversaries Artillery, not to Fight against them, but to Assault their Prince, and batter that Authority of which they formerly boasted, They were the only Supporters: The most Unjustifiable, and Shameful Inconstancy, is that of Altering, and Changing, and Closing with any thing, to serve a present Turn; Why may you not tell the People in his Majesties words, That none of His Subjects shall be Forced by Fines, and other Penalties, to Submit their Judgment

to others in the weightieſt matters, as well as to tell the Nation this in Print, That Clergy-men muſt follow their own Judgment, not only in matters of Religion, but of Law alſo? If Inferiour Officers are not ſatisfied that their Superiours Command is not Lawful, Is it not enough for them to deſiſt from Obeying it, without making Clamours againſt it in Print? Can they not comfort themſelves (in Silence) with that Doctrine of Univerſal Paſſive-Obedience, which they, when in the height of their Eaſe and Authority, Preached to others as Orthodox and Sound; and thought they thereby Signalized their Loyalty above all other Societies of People in the World? If a Prince Declares, That there are ſome Laws in being, which are greatly Injurious to many of His Subjects, and that He is willing, That theſe Inconveniences ſhall be redreſſed in a Legal Way: Can any thing be more Condeſcending and Gracious, then for him to Certifie this to his People, who are to Chooſe thoſe that are to Repeal ſuch Laws as are Prejudicial, and make ſuch Others, as may be for the Publick Good? What hurt can there be in making known the Princes Pleaſure in this, as particularly as he ſhall think meet, that His People may have time to Conſider and weigh Matters, that nothing be done Unadviſedly in ſuch Important Concerns?

But ſay you, *Miniſters of Religion have the Care and Conduct of Souls, and therefore are bound to take Care, that what they publiſh in their Churches be neither contrary to the Laws of the Land, or the good of the Church.*

If you would keep cloſe to your own Argument, you ſhould have ſaid, That Miniſters who have the Care of Souls, are bound to take Care, that what they publiſh in their Churches, be not contrary to the Law of God.

But Since you Speak of the Laws of the Land, I can ſee no reaſon from thence, Why ſuch Orders as are given by thoſe that are under His Majeſty ſhould be Enjoyned, to be Obſerved, (though Conſcience be really concerned in the Matter) and His Majeſties Orders, which have far greater Authority be, Denied: It may be when People are well acquainted with the Kings Declaration, it may have this good Effect, That the Miniſters of Religion, ſhall not be compelled to Publiſh other Peoples Pleaſures in their Churches; at leaſt, not under ſuch ſevere Temporal Penalties, as have been heretofore inſiſted on.

You ſay, *Miniſters of Religion are not looked upon as common Cryers; but what they Read they are ſuppoſed to Recommend too.*

If they have not been looked upon as common Cryers, I think they have been looked upon as Worſe; When Biſhops ſent Orders made Arbitrarily by Juſtices of the Seſſions, to be Publiſhed by them in time of Divine Service: But doth not the Rubrick appoint, That what the King Enjoyns, as well as what the Biſhops Enjoyn, ſhall be Publiſhed in the Churches? The Clergy of the Church of *England* have loudly Taught, and ſolemnly Owned, That the King of *England*, as Head of the Church, has Power to make Injunctions and Conſtitutions, and are not Miniſters every jot as much obliged to be His Majeſty's Cryers, as to be Inſtruments through which the Biſhop's Eccho may ſound more Audibly to the People?

But what they Read, they Recommend too. Miniſters are not to be conſidered alike, in every thing they Publiſh in the Church. A difference ariſes from the Nature of the things we Publiſh: Reading a Chapter in the Bible, and Publiſhing the Banns of Matrimony, or Citations, are differently to be Conſidered; when you Publiſh the Banns, what do you Recommend, unleſs it be to know, Whether any of the People have any

thing

ſhing to Object, againſt ſuch Perſons Marrying? But ſeeing you ſay, That *for a Miniſter to Read any thing in the Church which he does not conſent to, or approve, is to Miſguide the People*: I would ask you this one Queſtion, Whether you do really think, that the Worſhip which His Majeſty doth Celebrate, be the true, and right Way of Worſhipping God, which Proteſtants ought to Pray He may be kept and ſtrengthened in? If you are for the Negative, Pray conſider what you Recommend to the People, when you Read theſe Words in the Litany; *That it may pleaſe Thee to keep and ſtrengthen, in the true Worſhipping of Thee, Thy Servant* James, *Our moſt Gracious King and Governour.*

But Reading is Teaching: Very good; What then? *I may not Read any thing in the Church, but what I approve.* But, are not the People Judges for themſelves of what you Read? It is not your Reading a thing in the Church, that Determines the People, unleſs they pay the Clergy a greater Deference than they deſerve; After all your Reading, and Teaching too, be it in a Sermon of your own making, (which no doubt, you prefer much above His Majeſty's Declaration) Proteſtants will not follow your Conduct any farther, than they are Convinced it is good: A Man is not Determined by what he hears, otherwiſe than by the Evidence he hath concerning it: Now it would almoſt tempt People to believe the Declaration hath ſo much Reaſon and Light accompanying it, as Our Clergy cannot well Anſwer; and that therefore they are afraid to read it, leaſt the People ſhould be Convinced, and not follow their Conduct ſo ſervilely as they would have them.

But, Why may I not then Read a Homily or Tranſubſtantiation, or Invocation of Saints, if the King ſends me ſuch? Let the Queſtion be, *Whether every thing Read in the Church, be a part of Divine Service?* And then if you Conſider, and Anſwer it ſedately, you will find your own Queſtion Reſolved.

If you can prove the Declaration to be contrary to the Word of God, I will have no further Conteſt with you about Reading it in the Church: I wiſh no humane Orders were impoſed upon Miniſters, to be Read in the Church: But if any Perſons have right to enjoyn them to Read ſuch Orders there, certainly the KING has much more.

The King intends, Our Reading this Declaration ſhould ſignifie to the Nation, Our Conſent and Approbation of it: What have Clergy-men to do, to pry into the King's ſecret Intentions? The Declaration ſpeaks plainly for it ſelf. But *the Declaration does not want Publiſhing*. How can you tell that? Muſt the Clergy, or His Majeſty judge when His Declaration is ſufficiently made known? But *this is deſigned to ſerve inſtead of Addreſſes of Thanks, which the Clergy generally refuſed, though it was only to thank the King for His Gracious Promiſes, Renewed to the Church of* England: Many of the Clergy have been looked upon a great while, as Perſons Addicted beyond Meaſure to flatter their Prince; and behold, all on a ſudden, they are become Rude towards him, or worſe; if they may not have leave to Miſchief their Diſſenting Neighbours, they will not thank their Prince for renewed Promiſes to Protect and Maintain them: Was ever ill Manners and Ingratitude towards a Prince, thus rudely and diſingeniouſly boaſted of? Who can think theſe Perſons apprehend themſelves to be in danger of falling without Pity, who brag thus openly of their Stoutneſs, that they would not ſo much as give their Prince Thanks, for the moſt Gracious Promiſe he could make them?

You ſay, *It does not become a Miniſter of Religion to do any thing, which in the Opinion*

pinion of the most Charitable Man, can only be Excused. In this, I think you are very much in the Right; I wish the Multitude to whom your Letters are sent, may fix their Hearts on this pertinent Passage: No Charity can Excuse at present, a great many of your former Practises, nor will they find any Excuse at last, if not timely repented of: If you had hitherto Acted by this Rule, you would never have needed to fear your Fall with Contempt, or without Pity.

You mention the *Book of Sports*, which was ordered to be read in Churches. I will not say, how strict the greatest Church-men were for Reading of it, nor how well it did Comport with the Fourth Command; I only enquire, whether the present KING, has not as much Right and Power, to Order his Declaration to be Read in Churches, as King *Charles* the *1st.* had, to order the *Book of Sports* to be Read there? And which of these two did Thwart the Holy Scriptures most?

You say, *It is against the Constitution of the Church of* England; *It is to teach an Unlimited and Universal Toleration, which was Declared in Parliament Illegal, in* 1672, *and has been condemned by the Christian Church in all Ages.*

The King's Authority to make Injunctions and Orders, has been heretofore cryed up, as a main part of the Constitution of the Church of *England*; How comes this Change all on a sudden? But, what is this Universal Toleration? No more but this, That no one Party of His Majesty's Subjects, shall be trusted with a Power to destroy all the Rest: Will nothing serve your turn, unless you may continually render your selves grievous to your Fellow Subjects? Must none live and enjoy the comfortable Influences of Society and Government, but those who will entirely surrender themselves, blindly to your Dictates? Methinks, Sober, Understanding and good Clergy-men, should be afraid, lest any of that which was *Levi's* Reproach, should be a Brand upon them. *The Instruments of Cruelty are in their Habitation; Oh! My Soul, come not thou into their Secret,* Gen. 49. 5, 6.

I will not intermeddle with Parliaments, but only say, *They are not always of one and the same mind*; and Time was, when many of the Clergy of the Church of *England*, talked very contemptibly of some of them. But in that you say, *It has been Condemned by the Christian Church in all Ages*; this wants Proof: If it be well considered, the Christian Church will be found to thrive best, under such an Universal Toleration as *Constantine* did grant, before Ease, Pleasure and Wealth, had Corrupted the Bishops. Hence the Proverb, *Golden Priests*, and *Wooden Chalices*, *Golden Chalices*, *Wooden Priests*; till the Clergy grew Negligent and Haughty under *Constantines* Reign: It is certain, the Orthodox had no Humane Penal Laws whereby to punish Hereticks.

Say you, (1.) *It is to Teach my People, they need never come to Church more*: To what an Extravagant Indecency, towards both their Prince and their Church, will the Affection of Tyrannizing over others, Transport some Church-men? Could any Enemy of the Church of *England*, have advanced any thing more to Her Discredit, than to say, *Her Members are under no Obligation to attend on Her Ministry, but what arises from Force and Penal Laws?* Why may not People have your leave, as well as their KING's, to go, not only to Conventicles, but to the Mass, till they are convinc'd, that they do ill in going thither? It is much better becoming a Minister of Religion, to Convince such by Scripture and Reason, that their Worship is false, then to Contend to have them cast into Prison, and by Fines and Confiscations, to Compel them against their Conscience to come to Church; for their Presence there, is no more pleasing

ſing to God, nor Beneficial to their own Souls, whilſt their Minds are elſewhere, than it would be, if they were at a Conventicle, or at Maſs.

(2.) It is to teach the Diſpenſing Power, which alters what has been formerly thought the whole Conſtitution of this Church and Kingdom.

Who are they that thus thought formerly? Surely, none of thoſe who Taught loudly, and in Prints ſolemnly Authorized, That *Acts of Parliament* were *Acts of Grace*, that the Princes Power could not be bounded; if there be any remaining, who were always of another Opinion, they may pretend the ſame things now as heretofore: But for ſuch Perſons as have been Inſtruments of Wrong and Miſchief, to borrow ſuch Notions from others, before they have Renounced their former Avowed Principles, and ſatisfied for their Injuries they have done, They can have nothing to Alledge for themſelves, which can juſtifie them in this preſent Affair.

(3.) It is to Recommend to Our People the Choice of ſuch Perſons to ſit in Parliament, as ſhall take away the Teſt and Penal Laws.

Is not this to Recommend the Clergy, as Perſons of great Tenderneſs toward the People? You would never permit them to be Quiet, as long as it was in your Power to make them Uneaſy: You would now perſwade them, that the Nobility and Gentry are as much againſt the People's Eaſe, as you are; (for which, I ſuppoſe, ſome of them will return you no Thanks) and now you will not Read the King's Declaration to your People, becauſe it teacheth them how they may provide for their own Eaſe, ſo as to live peaceably among themſelves, and ſecurely, under His Majeſty's Tender and Equal Care for them all.

(4.) It is to Condemn all thoſe great and Worthy Patriots of their Country, who forfeited the deareſt thing in the World, to them, next a good Conſcience; viz. *The Favour of their Prince, and a great many Honourable and Profitable Employments, with it, rather than conſent to that Propoſal, of taking away the Teſt and Penal Laws, which they apprehend Deſtructive to the Church of* England, *and the Proteſtant Religion: And he who can in Conſcience do all this, I think, need ſcruple nothing.*

Your Reading the Declaration, doth no more condemn thoſe who approve not of the King's Intentions therein Explained, than your refuſing to Read it, doth Condemn the KING: A good Conſcience ſhould be very Dear to every Man; I think no Man ſhould Act in direct Oppoſition to an Erring Conſcience, till he can be better Inſtructed: Thoſe that do really Apprehend, that taking away Penal Laws will be Deſtructive to the Church of *England*, and Proteſtant Religion, ought not to Intereſt themſelves for the taking them away: But I do not underſtand, why both theſe may not be ſufficiently ſecured by other means, than by putting a Power in the Hands of one Party of His Majeſty's Subjects, to ruine all the reſt; whether ſuch a Security may not be found out, will be beſt Determined, when conſidered by the Wiſdom of the Nation, when met; and in a Capacity to Repeal ſome Old, and make other New Laws, as Emergencies may require.

Now let any Rational Man judge, Whether, notwithſtanding all your Arguments, a Conſcientious Man, who does not ſcruple to Read the King's Declaration, may not ſcruple at many things which you have done formerly, and at your ſtriving to keep your ſelves ſtill in a Capacity, to do the like for the future.

You ſay, *Reading the Declaration, will Render your Perſons and Miniſtry, infinitely Contemptible.* Infinite Contempt, is huge Contempt indeed; I acknowledge, Miniſters ought to behave themſelves ſo, as that they be neither Blamed nor Contemned: There is ſcarce any thing makes a Miniſter more

more justly contemptible, than Encouraging Immoralities, Flattering and Soothing great Men, and shewing a Domineering Temper, and Insatiable Cruelty, where they can have an Opportunity to Exercise it: Let such as have been Guilty of these or the like Crimes, reflect on themselves and Repent, and they need not fear Contempt for Reading the Declaration.

Nothing will so Effectually tend to the Final Ruine of the Church of England, *because Our Reading will discourage, or provoke, or misguide all the Churches Friends.*

In that You except not one of her Friends, you horridly affront them all, by the Character you give them; for you herein suppose them all to be either very Timerous, very Testy, or very Ignorant Persons; But I think you are greatly out, and lay abundantly more Weight on the Clergies Reading the Declaration, than it will bear: For whether you Read or not, such as are judicious and good Friends to the Church, will be firm to Her, and to their Religion; and till you prove, that nothing can secure the Religion of our Church, but these *Penal Laws* and *Tests*, your dismal Consequence vanishes into Nothing: The Church of *England* may be kept upon Her true Foundation, (and I hope Penal Laws have not much to do there) and be by Law secured in all Her Rights, from being hurt by any other Parties, (if these LAWS and TESTS be Repealed.) And she will be never the less Beautiful and Prosperous, because the Power which she has used to hurt others, is taken out of her hands: But how does your Reading Contribute so mightily to a Repeal, when all that hear it, are at Liberty to judge for themselves? Your Way of Discourting as you do, about Reading the Declaration, would tempt one to think, that you are of Opinion, either, that the Declaration is Attended with such convincing Reason, as will certainly satisfie People as soon as they hear it; or else, that nothing is necessary in any Point to Determine, and fix People's Minds and Judgments, but only to have such a thing Read by the Minister in the Church.

Your Answer to the Objection You raise touching Dissenters, is very Faint: Say you, *When there is an Opportunity of shewing Our Inclinations without Danger, they may find We are not such Persecutors as we are Represented.*

Though they are not to be Compared with the Nobility and Gentry; yet one would think, one Positive Promise might have been by you, on this Occasion afforded them; What signifies, *They may find*, that which they could never yet find? For as oft as you have been Tryed hitherto, you have as soon as ever you were in a Capacity, proved Unfaithful to them; They have felt the Weight of your Fingers: There neither has been, nor is any need of others to Represent to them what Persecutors you have been, and may be found again, if you have Opportunity of shewing your Inclinations without Danger, for ought that you have hitherto Manifested to the contrary: For here is not a Word of any positive Respect or Tenderness towards them: Is there a Change wrought in your Inclinations, without any Sence of the Wrong you have done? Here is not a Syllable of any Relenting at your former Severities; your Letter abounds with Flattery towards the Nobility and Gentry, Repeated many times over, but not a tittle of any Care you have taken, that the Dissenters may have their Liberty: As oft as it hath been granted by Royal Dispensations, you have been angry at it; as oft as it has been propos'd in Parliament, you have Oppos'd it: So that you might have Omitted this Objection you have raised concerning the Dissenters, and have passed them over in Silence, as a People, whose Anger or Friendship you have no regard to; unless after you made the Objection, you had vouchsafed to have Answered it also, more to their Satisfaction.

You Conclude with a very honest Propoal of Prayer, with which I heartily Concur; and Pray, That every Party of Professed Christians, may upon all Occasions, approve themselve Persons of True Piety, Moderation, and Real Fidelity.

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Why [illegible]

ere was no such Danger, yea, when the aking them away, might have rendred e Introducing of Popery inconceivably Difficult, if not Impossible?

But how do you know, that you judge ight in this Case now? Why say you, *We have the Concurring Opinion of the Nobility and Gentry with us, who have already suffered in this Cause:* But is this the roof of an Opinion, to say, That some f Honour and Wealth, have Embraced nd Adhere to it, though with some Inonvenience to themselves? It would almost tempt a man to think a Reasoner is t a great Loss, when instead of Arguents, he insists for proof on the Outide Grandeur of such as are of the Opinion he pleads for.

When the Prince, and many of the eople were averse to the Crucifying of *CHRIST*, what a Clamour did the Clergy make, *Have any of the Rulers, or the Pharisees believed on him? But this People who know not the Law, are Accursed*: John 7. 48. 49.

But suppose you are right in this point, What Efficacy hath the Clergy's Reading the King's Declaration, to take off the Tests and Penal Laws? If the Clergy's Breath can shake, or throw them away, either the Laws are of little worth, and have a very sorry foundation, or the Clergy are Men of an Admirable Character.

But say you, *Though our Reading, do not immediately bring in Popery, yet it sets open our Church Doors for it*: I cannot imagine, Why our Church Doors may not be Shutt and Lock'd as fast after Reading, as before; But if the Clergy pretend to such Power with their breath (as to break the Strongest Barrs, set Open our Church-Doors so Wide, as that they can never be Shut again) They may well allow their Prince a Dispensing Power; or how can He be Safe, as long as they can breathe?

Say you, *If we comply with this Order, the good Protestants will Despise and Hate* sential part of a good Protestants Religion; if the Order be not Sinful, they will have no cause to Despise you, because you read it, and Act therein according to your Avowed Doctrine.

If the Order be in your Opinion Sinful, Why do you not shew, what Law of God is Broken by it? This is that you should have done, and not have insisted on such poor low considerations, as Personal Danger, Dishonour, and falling without Pity.

He that Suffers on a Good Account, hath Honour and Comfort enough in himself, and from his God; He that Suffers in a bad Cause, falls Dishonourably, though he have never so many Great Men to pity him.

The *Great Difficulty*, You say, of your Case is this, *That fall you must, Sooner or Later*; And therefore like Prudent Men, you think the Wisest Course is, to be Ruined presently; But it is not the first time I have heard of that Wise sort of People, who are for a short Life, and a Merry: But what Necessity is there of your latter Falling? This is certainly like a Melancholy Mans cherishing such a resolved Jealousie of wanting Bread at Last, as makes him Pine himself to Death in the midst of Plenty. But what is the ground of this Jealousie? *If we fall after Reading, this is the way never to Rise more*: And what mean you by that? Is it that after Reading the Declaration, if Penal Laws be taken away, you shall never be trusted again with such a Power to mischief your Fellow Subjects? If this be all, it may be all for the better; for neither the Prosperity of the Church of Christ, nor the Honour or Welfare of the Kingdom, do at all depend on One Parties having it in their Power to Impoverish or Ruine all the Rest of the Nation for Meer Matters of Conscience.

You now come to *Examine the Matter*, as you say, Impartially; And first, *You*

England can give his consent to the Declaration? This is just as much as to beg the Question you should prove, and so all you Write signifies nothing with those who do not Suppose what you Suppose.

If you had indeed impartially Examined, and Proved the matter of the Declaration to be Sinful; you would have had no occasion to have discovered your Disloyalty, in pretending an Authority against the Command of your Prince, nor of Instancing (as if you had lately perused the Old History of the Barons Wars) that you have the Nobility and Gentry on your Side.

You say, *Reading the Declaration would be no fault at all, but our duty, when the King Commands it, did we approve of the Matter of it.* This is not Express'd after the usual manner of the Church of *England*, when treating with the Dissenters; They would not then yield that Orders might be Suspended from a Publication, till those who were required to publish them did approve the matter, but it was then constantly Affirmed, that the Order must be Obeyed, If the matter of it were not plainly Sinful; and of this, you Asserted, Authority was to Judge: Was not this the lowest, you would ever stoop, when Scruples were raised, and Conscience pretended against your Orders? Where does the Scriptures forbid it? If it be not Forbidden, the Command is plain (and the safest way must be taken, which is) to Obey. It is certain, some parts of the Declaration, contain very plain and necessary Truths, which Church-of-England-Ministers ought to Approve; If there be any thing in it which you think you may not Approve, that should have been Specified; it would have been more modest, humbly to have Applyed to the King for a convenient Explication in that part, then presently in Print, to Cry the whole is Sinful, and a device to ruine that

Reading the Declaration in our Churches is an Interpretative Consent: Because, as you, *By Our Laws, Ministerial Officers are accountable, for their Actions; and the Authority of Superiours, though of the King himself, cannot justifie Inferiours in Executing any Illegal Command: With reference to the Command of Superiours, we are to exercise our own Judgment and Reason; and we may not obey a Prince against the Laws of the Land, or the Laws of God, because what he do, let the Authority be what it will that Commands it, becomes our own Act, and we are responsible for it.*

This sort of Arguing (whatever may be in it) would not a few years since be allowed by some sort of People sufficiently known in this Kingdom, when urg'd in opposition to their Inclinations: That the Prince was set above Law, and that His Command, and the Notification of His Pleasure, made any thing (which was not *Malum in se*) Obliging; Private Judgment might by no means be admitted, when once the Governours had interessed themselves in it, and made a Determination. Is it not very Disingenuous for any Men, especially for Ministers, to have recourse to a Principle of their Adversaries, (which they have for many years decried) onely because they would serve themselves with it upon a particular Occasion, and to forsake their own Doctrine, which they Avowed so long as it would gratifie their Revenge and Ambition, tho now they think it may do them some Diskindness? This is to fetch Weapons out of their Adversaries Artillery, not to Fight against them, but to Assault their Prince, and batter that Authority of which they formerly boasted, They were the only Supporters: The most Unjustifiable, and Shameful Inconstancy, is that of Altering, and Changing, and Closing with any thing, to serve a present Turn; Why may you not tell the People in his Majesties words, That

to others in the weightiest matters, as well as to tell the Nation this in Print, That Clergy-men must follow their own Judgment, not only in matters of Religion, but of Law also? If Inferiour Officers are not satisfied that their Superiours Command is not Lawful, Is it not enough for them to desist from Obeying it, without making Clamours against it in Print? Can they not comfort themselves (in Silence) with that Doctrine of Universal Passive-Obedience, which they when in the height of their Ease and Authority, Preached to others as Orthodox and Sound; and thought they thereby Signalized their Loyalty above all other Societies of People in the World? If a Prince Declares, That there are some Laws in being, which are greatly Injurious to many of His Subjects, and that He is willing, That these Inconveniences shall be redressed in a Legal Way: Can any thing be more Condescending and Gracious, then for him to Certifie this to his People, who are to Choose those that are to Repeal such Laws as are Prejudicial, and make such Others, as may be for the Publick Good? What hurt can there be in making known the Princes Pleasure in this, as particularly as he shall think meet, that His People may have time to Consider and weigh Matters, that nothing be done Unadvisedly in such Important Concerns?

But say you, *Ministers of Religion have the Care and Conduct of Souls, and therefore are bound to take Care, that what they publish in their Churches be neither contrary to the Laws of the Land, or the good of the Church.*

If you would keep close to your own Argument, you should have said, That Ministers who have the Care of Souls, are bound to take Care, that what they publish in their Churches, be not contrary to the Law of God.

But Since you Speak of the Laws of thence, Why such Orders as are given by those that are under His Majesty, should be Enjoyned to be Observed, (though Conscience be really concerned in the Matter) and His Majesties Orders, which have far greater Authority be, Denied: It may be, when People are well acquainted with the Kings Declaration, it may have this good Effect, That the Ministers of Religion, shall not be compelled to Publish other Peoples Pleasures in their Churches; at least, not under such severe Temporal Penalties, as have been heretofore insisted on.

You say, *Ministers of Religion are not looked upon as common Cryers; but what they Read they are supposed to Recommend too.*

If they have not been looked upon as common Cryers, I think they have been looked upon as Worse; When Bishops Sent Orders made Arbitrarily by Justices of the Sessions, to be Published by them in time of Divine Service: Bse doth not the Rubrick appoint, That what the King Enjoyns, as well as what the Bishops Enjoyns, shall be Published in the Churches? The Clergy of the Church of *England* have loudly Taught, and solemnly Owned, That the King of *England*, as Head of the Church, has Power to make Injunctions and Constitutions, and are not Ministers every jot as much obliged to be His Majesty's Cryers, as to be Instruments through which the Bishop's Eccho may sound more Audibly to the People?

But what they Read, they Recommend too. Ministers are not to be considered alike, in every thing they Publish in the Church. A difference arises from the Nature of the things we Publish: Reading a Chapter in the Bible, and Publishing the Banns of Matrimony, or Citations, are differently to be Considered; when you Publish the Banns, what do you Recommend, unless it be to know

thing to Object, against such Persons Marrying? But seeing you say, That *for a Minister to Read any thing in the Church which he does not consent to, or approve, is to Misguide the People*; I would ask you this one Question, Whether you do really think, that the Worship which His Majesty doth Celebrate, be the true, and right Way of Worshipping God, which Protestants ought to Pray He may be kept and strengthened in? If you are for the Negative, Pray consider what you Recommend to the People, when you Read these Words in the Litany; *That it may please Thee to keep and strengthen, in the true Worshipping of Thee, Thy Servant* James, *Our most Gracious King and Governour.*

But Reading is Teaching: Very good; What then? *I may not Read any thing in the Church, but what I approve.* But, are not the People Judges for themselves of what you Read? It is not your Reading a thing in the Church, that Determines the People, unless they pay the Clergy a greater Deference than they deserve; After all your Reading, and Teaching too, be it in a Sermon of your own making, (which no doubt, you prefer much above His Majesty's Declaration) Protestants will not follow your Conduct any farther, than they are Convinced it is good: A Man is not Determined by what he hears, otherwise than by the Evidence he hath concerning it: Now it would almost tempt People to believe the Declaration hath so much Reason and Light accompanying it, as Our Clergy cannot well Answer; and that therefore they are afraid to read it, least the People should be Convinced, and not follow their Conduct so servilely as they would have them.

But, Why may I not then Read a Homily for Transubstantiation, or Invocation of Saints, if the King sends me such? Let the Question be, *Whether every thing Read in the Church, be a part of Divine Serv*[illegible] And then if you Consider, and Answer [illegible]sedately, you will find your own Questi[illegible] Resolved.

If you can prove the Declaration to [illegible] contrary to the Word of God, I will [illegible] no further Contest with you about Read[illegible]ing it in the Church: I wish no [illegible] Orders were imposed upon Minist[illegible] be Read in the Church: But [illegible] Persons have right to enjoyn them to Re[illegible] such Orders there, certainly the KING has much more.

The King intends, Our Reading this Declaration should signifie to the Nation, Our Consent and Approbation of it: What have Clergy-men to do, to pry into the King's secret Intentions? The Declaration speaks plainly for it self. But *the Declaration does not want Publishing.* How can you [illegible] that? Must the Clergy, or His Maj[illegible] judge when His Declaration is sufficiently made known? But *this is designed to serve instead of Addresses of Thanks, which the Clergy generally refused, though it was only to thank the King for His Gracious Promises, Renewed to the Church of England*: Many of the Clergy have been looked upon a great while, as Persons Addicted beyond Mensure to flatter their Prince; and behold, all on a sudden, they are become Rude towards him, or worse; if they may not have leave to Mischief their Dissenting Neighbours, they will not thank their Prince for renewed Promises to Protect and Maintain them: Was ever ill Manners and Ingratitude towards a Prince, thus rudely and disingeniously boasted of? Who can think these Persons apprehend themselves to be in danger of falling without Pity, who brag thus openly of their Stoutness, that they would not so much as give their Prince Thanks, for the most Gracious Promise he could make them?

You say, *It does not become a Minister of Religion to do any thing, which in the O*[illegible]

gion of the moſt Charitable Man, can only Excuſed. In this, I think you are very much in the Right: I wiſh the Multitude to whom your Letters are ſent, may fix their Hearts on this pertinent Paſſage: No Charity can Excuſe at preſent, a great many of your former Practiſes, nor will they find any Excuſe at laſt, if not timely repented of: If you had hitherto Acted by this Rule, you would never have needed to fear your Fall with Contempt, or without Pity.

You mention the *Book of Sports*, which was ordered to be read in Churches. I will not ſay, how ſtrict the greateſt Church-men were for Reading of it, nor how well it did Comport with the Fourth Command; I only enquire, whether the preſent KING, has not as much Right and Power, to Order his Declaration to be Read in Churches, as King *Charles* the 1ſt. had, to order the *Book of Sports* to be Read there? And which of theſe two did Thwart the Holy Scriptures moſt?

You ſay, *It is againſt the Conſtitution of the Church of* England; *It is to teach an Unlimited and Univerſal Toleration, which was Declared in Parliament Illegal, in* 1672, *and has been condemned by the Chriſtian Church in all Ages.*

The King's Authority to make Injunctions and Orders, has been heretofore cryed up, as a main part of the Conſtitution of the Church of *England*; How comes this Change all on a ſudden? But, what is this Univerſal Toleration? No more but this, That no one Party of His Majeſty's Subjects, ſhall be truſted with a Power to deſtroy all the Reſt: Will nothing ſerve your turn, unleſs you may continually render your ſelves grievous to your Fellow Subjects? Muſt none live and enjoy the comfortable Influences of Society and Government, but thoſe who will entirely ſurrender themſelves blindly to your Dictates? Methinks, Sober, Underſtanding and good Chriſtians, ſhould be afraid, leſt any of that which was *Levi's* Reproach, ſhould be a Brand upon them. *The Inſtruments of Cruelty are in their Habitation; Oh! My Soul, come not thou into their Secret*, Gen. 49. 5, 6.

I will not intermeddle with Parliaments, but only ſay, *They are not always of one and the ſame mind*; and Time was, when many of the Clergy of the Church of *England*, talked very contemptibly of ſome of them. But in that you ſay, *It has been Condemned by the Chriſtian Church in all Ages*; this wants Proof: If it be well conſidered, the Chriſtian Church will be found to thrive beſt, under ſuch an Univerſal Toleration as *Conſtantine* did grant, before Eaſe, Pleaſure and Wealth, had Corrupted the Biſhops. Hence the Proverb, *Golden Prieſts, and Wooden Chalices, Golden Chalices, Wooden Prieſts*; till the Clergy grew Negligent and Haughty under *Conſtantines* Reign: It is certain, the Orthodox had no Humane Penal Laws whereby to puniſh Hereticks.

Say you, (1.) *It is to Teach my People, they need never come to Church more*: To what an Extravagant Indecency, towards both their Prince and their Church, will the Affection of Tyrannizing over others, Tranſport ſome Church-men? Could any Enemy of the Church of *England*, have advanced any thing more to Her Diſcredit, than to ſay, *Her Members are under no Obligation to attend on Her Miniſtry, but what ariſes from Force and Penal Laws?* Why may not People have your leave, as well as their KING's, to go, not only to Conventicles, but to the Maſs, till they are convinc'd, that they do ill in going thither? It is much better becoming a Miniſter of Religion, to Convince ſuch by Scripture and Reaſon, that their Worſhip is falſe, then to Contend to have them caſt into Priſon, and by Fines and Confiſcations, to Compel them againſt their Conſcience to come to Church; for their Preſence there, is no more than

sing to God, nor Beneficial to their own Souls, whilst their Minds are elsewhere, than it would be, if they were at a Conventicle, or at Mass.

(2.) *It is to teach the Dispensing Power, which alters what has been formerly thought the whole Constitution of this Church and Kingdom.*

Who are they that thus thought formerly? Surely, none of those who Taught loudly, and in Prints solemnly Authorized, That *Acts of Parliament* were *Acts of Grace*, that the Princes Power could not be bounded, if there be any remaining, who were always of another Opinion, they may pretend the same things now as heretofore: But for such Persons as have been Instruments of Wrong and Mischief, to borrow such Notions from others, before they have Renounced their former Avowed Principles, and satisfied for their Injuries they have done, They can have nothing to Alledge for themselves, which can justifie them in this present Affair.

(3.) *It is to Recommend to Our People the Choice of such Persons to sit in Parliament, as shall take away the Test and Penal Laws.*

Is not this to Recommend the Clergy, as Persons of great Tenderness toward the People? You would never permit them to be Quiet, as long as it was in your Power to make them Uneasy: You would now perswade them, that the Nobility and Gentry are as much against the People's Ease, as you are; (for which, I suppose, some of them will return you no Thanks) and now you will not Read the King's Declaration to your People, because it teacheth them how they may provide for their own Ease, so as to live peaceably among themselves, and securely, under His Majesty's Tender and Equal Care for them all.

(4.) *It is to Condemn all those great and Worthy Patriots of [illegible] who forfeited the dearest thing in the World to them, next a good Conscience; viz. The Favour of their Prince, and a great [illegible] Honourable and Profitable Employment with it, rather than consent to that Proposal, of taking away the Test and Penal Laws, which they apprehend Destructive to the Church of* England, *and the Protestant Religion: And he who can in Conscience do all this, I think, need scrupe nothing.*

Your Reading the Declaration, does no more condemn those who approve not of the King's Intentions therein Explained, than your refusing to Read it, does Condemn the KING: A good Conscience should be very Dear to every Man: I think no Man should Act in direct Opposition to an Erring Conscience, till he can be better Instructed: Those that do really Apprehend, that taking away Penal Laws will be Destructive to the Church of *England*, and Protestant Religion, ought not to Interest themselves for the taking them away: But I do not understand, why both these may not be sufficiently secured by other means, than by putting a Power in the Hands of one Party of His Majesty's Subjects, to ruine all the rest; whether such a Security may not be found out, will be best Determined, when considered by the Wisdom of the Nation, when met; and in a Capacity to Repeal some Old, and make other New Laws, as Emergencies may require.

Now let any Rational Man judge, Whether, notwithstanding all your Arguments, a Conscientious Man, who does not scruple to Read the King's Declaration, may not scruple at many things which you have done formerly, and at your striving to keep your selves still in a Capacity, to do the like for the future.

You say, *Reading the Declaration, will Render your Persons and Ministry, infinitely Contemptible.* Infinite Contempt, is huge Contempt indeed; I acknowledge, Ministers ought to behave themselves so, as that they be neither Blamed nor Contemn-

...ly contemptible, than Encouraging Impudence, Flattering and Soothing great Men, ...Courting a Domineering Temper, and Insulting Cruelty, where they can have an Opportunity to exercise it: Let such as have been Guilty of ...ese, or the like Crimes, reflect on themselves ...Repent, and they need not fear Contempt for ...ading the Declaration.

Nothing will so Effectually tend to the Final Ruin of the Church of England, *because Our Reading will discourage, or provoke, or misguide all the ...ly Friends.*

In that You except not one of her Friends, ...horridly affront them all, by the Character ...give them; for you therein suppose them all ...be either very Timerous, very Testy, or very ...norant Persons. But I think you are greatly ...n, and lay abundantly more Weight on the ...ngles Reading the Declaration, than it will ...ar. For whether you Read or no, such as are ...dicious and good Friends to the Church, will ...d firm to Her, and to their Religion; and till ...e prove, that nothing can secure the Religion ...the Church, but these *Penal Laws* and *Tests*, ...ose dismal Consequence vanishes into Nothing: The Church of *England* may be kept upon Her ...n Foundation, (and I hope Penal Laws have ...ch to do there) and be by Law secured ...all Her Rights, from being hurt by any other Parties, (If these LAWS and TESTS be Repealed.) And She will be never the less Beautiful and Prosperous, because the Power which She has used to hurt others, is taken out of her hands: But how does your Reading Contribute so mightily to a Repeal, when all that hear it, are at Liberty to judge for themselves? Your Way of Discoursing as you do, about Reading the Declaration, would tempt one to think, that you are of Opinion, either, that the Declaration is Attended with such convincing Reason, as will certainly satisfie People as soon as they hear it; or else, that nothing is necessary in any Point to Determine, and fix People's Minds and Judgments, but only to have such a thing Read by the Minister in the Church.

You Answer to the Objection of the Dissenters, is very [illegible] When there is no Apprehension of Danger, they may [illegible] are not such Parsimonious as you are, to Reproach [illegible]

Though they are not to be Compared with the Nobility and Gentry; yet one would think, one Positive Promise might have been by you, on this Occasion afforded them; What signifies, They may find that which they could never yet find, For as oft as you have been Argued hitherto, you have as soon as ever you were in a Capacity, proved Unfaithful to them; They have felt the Weight of your Fingers: There neither has been, nor is any need of others to Remember them what Persecutions you have Intended may be Intended again, if you have Opportunity of shewing your Inclinations without Danger, for ought that you have hitherto Manifested to the contrary: For here is not a Word of any positive Retract or Testimonie towards them: Is there a Change wrought in your Inclinations, without any Sense of the Wrong you have done? Here is not a Syllable of any Relenting at your former Severities; your Letter abounds with Flattery towards the Nobility and Gentry, Repeated many times over, but not a tittle of any Care you have taken, that the Dissenters may have their Liberty: As oft as it hath been granted by Royal Dispensations, you have been angry at it; as oft as it has been purpos'd in Parliament, you have Oppos'd it: So that you might have Omitted this Objection you have raised concerning the Dissenters, and have passed them over in Silence, as a People, whose Anger or Friendship you have no regard for; nevertheless after you made the Objection, you had wherewithal to have Answered it also, more to their Satisfaction.

You Conclude with a very honest Proposal of Prayer, with which I heartily Concur; and Pray, That every Party of Professed Christians, may upon all Occasions, approve themselves Persons of True Piety, Moderation, and Real Fidelity.

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